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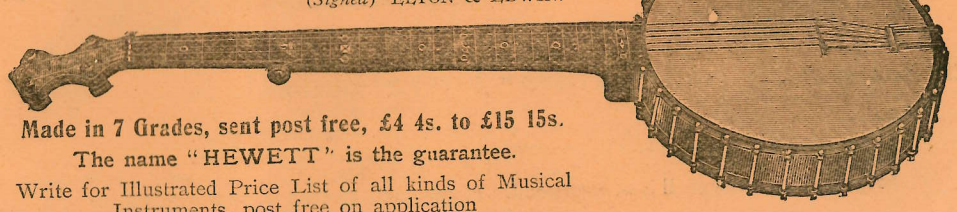

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THE EARLY EXPERIENCES OF AN OLD TIME BANJO PLAYER.

By TOM HAIGH.

IT was in 1868 I bought my first Banjo (if such it could be called), for the modest sum of 5/6. It's hoop was of scallopped wood, like a Tambourine, and painted black, with a parchment fixed with brass-headed tacks. I was under the tuition of a young fellow who played second Violin at the Theatre Royal, Stockton. He showed me how to tune it and play a breakdown with one finger and thumb only. After having had three lessons he told me he had shewn me all he knew, and that I had better get a tutor and teach myself if I wanted to learn any more. So I bought "Mackney's Sixpenny Banjo Tutor" for 5, 6, 7 and 9 strings, and struggled on with untiring energy and perseverance for a long time. Then I happened to meet a man who played a 6 stringed Banjo, and who showed me how to use the second and third fingers of the right hand. I got this man to make me a Banjo similar to the one he was using, with a brass rim and screws. I *did* think then I had got a prize. In 1878 I went to Leeds, and two years later I came across a doctor who had just imported a Stewart Banjo from America. I was almost enraptured when I got hold of this Banjo, until I got on to the big stretches, and then I failed to make the chords clear, as it was too long in the neck. I ultimately purchased a Dobson, all wood, covered back, 6 strings, from the late John Alvey Turner, who afterwards turned out a very kind friend to me.

It was in the early part of the year 1882, he wrote me to say he was publishing a new Banjo tutor, and that he would send me the very first copy with his compliments, which he did. This tutor turned out to be "Prof. Ballantine's Complete Method for the Banjo," the most comprehensive work that ever appeared, I consider (*i.e.* for 6 strings). I worked three or four hours a day until I had committed to memory all the keys, major and minor, with all incidental chords and modulations. In September of the same year I took a holiday, I wrote to Mr. Turner, telling him of the use I had made of the tutor, and asked him if he thought it would be to my advantage to pay a visit to London and have some lessons under Prof. Ballantine himself. Mr. Turner wrote me back to say, "Yes, come by all means, will see you right." It was on a visit to Mr. Turner that I heard the great E. M. Hall, and was introduced to Mr. Joe Daniels, both of whom I thought were very fine players.

In the year 1886 I went from Leeds to London to take charge of the studio of Mr. J. E. Brewster, who went for a three months' visit to America. Since I have been in Yorkshire I have met and played with the late Don Edgar of Edgar and Eugene, Mr. Albert Lyles, Mr. Arthur R. Turner, Mr. C. E. Brown and Mr. Geo. Bohee. When spending an afternoon with the latter I remember him saying to me, "You know, my boy, when I get hold of a Banjo I like to knock the very life and soul out of it." And now, in conclusion, a word of advice to young Banjoists. Learn a little at a time, go slowly, pay particular attention to get fingering correct, and don't forget to give scales and exercises a fair share of attention *every day*.

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A GUILD AND ITS GOOD TO US.

FOR over fourteen years—as reference to early numbers of our old friend, the "Troubadour" (then the "'Jo") will shew—the subject of whether teachers and players of the Banjo, Mandoline and Guitar should form themselves into an Institute, or Guild, or some such similar association, has been more or less actively occupying the minds of those most concerned with these three instruments. Articles on the subject have been written time after time, and correspondence has been repeatedly opened up, but, up to the present moment, no British organisation has resulted—not even a meeting called of influential persons representative of all their interests. The nearest approach so far, has been that comparatively recent effort in which the Mandoline and Guitar were featured, and, although it was afterwards decided that the Banjo should be included, there was from the first, little hope that under the conditions then ruling, the three were as sufficiently and adequately represented as would ensure that widespread recognition which could alone satisfy the requirements of everyone interested. The Banjo element is too strong in itself to work harmoniously in any concern in which its presence is only subordinate, and the absence of many of those names which are familiar to its devotees would at once excite doubt as to that necessarily strong representation which could demand universal approval. The mere fact of the continual recurrence of the subject shews that there are many who would entertain seriously the idea of the formation of some association from which mutual advantages could be derived, especially now that we hear so much of the American Guild, the success of its work, and the friendly spirit that exists amongst its members. As an example of the one we cannot have a stronger argument than that of their decision to adopt the "C" notation, whilst the reports of the recent convention are unanimous in their approval of the social side of the subject.

There is no reason whatever for supposing that teachers and the trade on that side are the least bit different from those over here in regard to the spirit that exists amongst them. Whatever we are expected to gather from the letters and articles we see in print, we *know* very well that the same old under-currents—never mind the details—are running there as strongly as they do here.

So, it is obvious that if personal differences and feelings can be sunk in a desire for advancing the general welfare in America, where we are led to believe that each man's hand is against his neighbours' in the frantic race for supremacy, what is to prevent the many who earn their living in a similar way in this country combining together in some way so as to exchange ideas on matters of mutual interest?

We all recognise that there is plenty of room for discussion on subjects connected with our work, and the more we come in contact with that of other countries the more it is apparent that we shall be left behind unless we seriously consider our position—we shall lose opportunities which we can yet make our own unless we leave them too long. How many times have the questions been asked, should the Banjeaurine lead in a Banjo band?—should Banjos, Mandolines and Guitars be associated together in an orchestra?—what is the proper tuning for a Mandola?—should bowed instruments be introduced into B.M.G. orchestras?—what are the Mandocello and Liuto?—would independent examinations in playing be generally acceptable to teachers and pupils?—how should a second Banjo part be written?—is the use of a plectrum legitimate Banjo playing? These are only a few that suggest themselves at the moment, and although they may be dismissed by some worthy persons because their individual opinions have not been consulted,—or because they *have*—still, we must remember that where one will consider such and such a well-known person to be able to speak authoritatively, another may hold quite a different view—may never have heard, perhaps, of this same person at all. All this would be altered if differences could be eliminated, and those whose names are best known in the section of the musical world in which they move could unite under one banner. It is impossible to hide from ourselves the fact that at the present time there are factions at work which—perhaps unconsciously—neutralise any good that those who are not part and parcel of them can do. The mere fact that one has originated an idea—or supports that of someone else—seems to be quite sufficient for the opposing powers to be set to work to condemn that particular idea root and branch. They may not at first rush into print over the matter—they wait until something has been done—then if it's a success the credit must be theirs, if it's the (fervently desired) failure, then—they foresaw it from the first. At the present moment there is an effort being made in London to bring the Banjo, Mandoline and Guitar into line with the accepted orchestral instruments, by instituting examinations at which certificates or diplomas for efficiency in various grades of playing are to be given. So far, so good, but a perusal of the syllabus reveals the fact that instead of a candidate in any section being judged on his efficiency in a *general* way, he *must* play examples selected from certain text books issued by particular firms, notwithstanding the fact that other firms may publish other works of (at least) equal value. There is no suggestion here that the methods of those who have prepared the syllabus are not legitimate, or that they are not entitled to select what they think best, it is merely a question of whether *their* selection gives that allround approval that will ensure the absolute and entire success of the undertaking. Besides which, it is open to considerable doubt as to whether some feeling would not exist when examinations were held, not on the part of the examiners, but at the idea of a well-known teacher's pupil going up for examination by another teacher. Comment on this head is needless.

No, it seems that we have commenced at the wrong end. If a Guild, or whatever it is, is to formed at all, it should be quite independent of any college or school or examining body whatever. It should be composed of persons who would more or less actively interest themselves in the common objects they mean to serve, without any immediate thought of remuneration.

Those in high standing in the profession would naturally be expected to be included, and as many of the teachers and trade as could be added. It would have to be altogether apart from personal feeling or bias, a gathering together of the lights which illuminate the whole work.

With such a body there is little doubt but that much good could be accomplished. Were it in existence an affiliation might be made with the American Guild, and the combined influence could be of world wide value.

The question is, are we unanimous enough to take in hand such an idea? Are we prepared to trouble ourselves to the required extent. Let it be quite understood that personal gain and profit would *have* to be sunk in a desire for the general welfare of all. That there is plenty of work to be done is undoubted, whether the workers are to be found is a subject to be decided by those who would share in the results.

Whatever are the opinions of our readers, our columns are open to them, and, as it can be seen that no personal advantage in the matter is foremost in the suggestion that "KEYNOTES" should ventilate the subject, we hope for letters which may show what the general ideas are.

THE EDITOR.

BANJO, MANDOLIN AND GUITAR ORCHESTRAL PARTS, Etc.

Written for "KEYNOTES" by WALTER J. STENT.

EXAMINATION of the Mandolin publications emanating from English, French and Italian sources reveals the necessity for some beneficial pressure to bring the various publishers into line, such as the United States Guild has accomplished for American music. We find publishers using different and confusing plectrum signs to express the same meaning. This irregularity is a natural outcome of the "I am the only" doctrine in which each publisher ignores the other, same as the teachers; and it would be gratifying to find either no signs at all, or the universal adoption of the signs recommended by the American Guild.

England has no Guild, and apparently cannot evolve one. What publisher will be the first to fall into line, surely where it is not possible to initiate, it cannot be *infra dig.* to follow an improving lead when presented. This, and other matters, are the function of a strong Guild to focus the scattered forces for the general good. Our American cousins are exploiting the Mandolin in a remarkably successful manner, the school of playing evolved is both forceful and brilliant, the dominating feature being virile tone power, strikingly absent by comparison in the Italian school, which is distinguished more by a dreamy sensuousness. However, this is a matter closely connected with the problem of scientific construction, which need not be discussed here, but the acquiring of a free educational balance between the two schools would be rendered easier of attainment by the universal adoption of plectrum signs or their total elimination, similar to some of the leading Violin schools of instruction. The present day Mandolinist *must* command tone power, for without it all efforts to engage and hold serious attention are more or less futile.

The inclusion of the Banjo in a Mandolin orchestra may be further profitably discussed, having little or no tonal sentiment in common with the Mandolin, yet when added judiciously, and the tone balance preserved less by the number of Banjos than by the ability of the players, and the music arranged by one with a close knowledge of both instruments, it undoubtedly adds power and tone colour to the general ensemble; so much so that it is not too much to say that no piece published at the present but could be rendered more effectively by the proper inclusion of the Banjo. Too often has it been the case that orchestrations have been received in which the Banjo part has either to be re-written or abandoned if best results are desired. Banjo parts arranged by a Mandolin player generally showing the weakness born of technical ignorance, and this is still more in evidence when "first" and "second" Banjo parts are issued, the first Banjo frequently following the first Mandolin almost note for note, except where it coincided with the second Banjo part, while the latter is often too manifestly weak to be admitted at all in a musical sense. There is room for great improvement here.

The best American arrangers content themselves with one Banjo part termed "obligato," but it has never yet been found impossible to add to the effectiveness by the inclusion of another Banjo part, carefully written and played either with or without a plectrum, or partaking of both styles. This also should receive attention in the near future, keen conductors require it, the best interests of the instruments demand it.

Orchestral arrangements must keep pace with the individual developments of efficiency in the instruments, very notable in the case of the Mandolin, as shewn by the series of Concert Solos published by J. A. Turner, and which mark a distinct advance upon anything ever before written in Mandolin literature. Orchestral clubs are an important factor in spreading popularity, and a vast amount of manuscript work falls on any live teacher in this direction, no matter where he is located. Some publishers have complained that the publication of band parts is not profitable, and judging by some of them the reason is not far to seek. "Please state when ordering whether Banjeaurine or Mandolin lead is wanted," this request, if cleared of fog, would read "Please state whether Banjo or Mandolin music," &c., &c. The Banjeaurine could with advantage be dropped entirely from Banjo and Mandolin combinations, the position originally designed for it, viz.: Solo Banjo in a Banjo club, suits it best. Two fantasias on popular airs from English sources include Solo Mandolin, First and Second Mandolins, all different parts, First Banjo coinciding with Solo Mandolin obviously for cheapness, Second Banjo parts more suited to Mandolin, and Tenor Mandola and Mandocello absent altogether. Much that is published is too indefinite and loose to engender confidence in sales. Let us have good music, original or otherwise, properly orchestrated and with correct and definite instrumentation, and publishers will soon find no cause for complaint from unsatisfactory sales.

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THE INTERNATIONAL MANDOLIN CONTESTS AT BOULOGNE, FRANCE.

The greatest event ever organised for the Mandolin.

Specially contributed to "KEYNOTES" by PHILIP J. BONE.

TO further elevate and make popular the higher study of the Mandolin was the sole aim that permeated the minds of the members of the Boulogne Estudiantina (Mandolin Band), when they decided to organise an International contest, open to all, for Mandolin bands (two classes—the "classic" and "libre"), quartets composed of 1st Mandolin, 2nd Mandolin, Mandola and Guitar, and soloists for all these instruments. Local contests are very frequently held in Italy, France, Switzerland, and Belgium; but in this instance the Boulogne Estudiantina undertook a more extended programme by making their contest International. Under the guidance of their able Musical Director, M. Cannas, and their worthy President, M. Hautin, the Boulogne Society received the patronage and support of the President of the French Republic, the Municipal Authorities of Boulogne, the Chamber of Commerce, and all the other leading organizations of the town and district.

The contests were held under the regulations and auspices of the French Federation of Estudiantinas, the jury or judges being appointed from the most celebrated Musicians and Mandolinists and Guitarists of France and Italy. At their head stood M. Alexander Guilmant, the venerable and celebrated Organist, and M. Alexander Georges, of the Paris Conservatoire of Music. Other Mandolinists and Guitarists among the judges were Pietrapertosa, Monti, Cottin, Fantauzzi, Del Castillo and Llobet. The contests were organised on a mammoth scale, and the whole affair was a gigantic success. The object of the Boulogne Estudiantina is certainly assured, and the contest will prove a great incentive to the higher development of the instrument and its music, and give a lasting impetus to the trade. The Town Council of Boulogne subscribed more than £200, and donations were also given by the President of the French Republic, the Senator of the district, the leading Parisian music publishers, and numerous other State and Municipal officials.

The dates fixed for the contests were Saturday, Sunday and Monday, the 29th, 30th, and 31st of May, and books of rules and regulations were supplied gratis upon application. Copies of the forms and particulars of entrance were also gratuitously supplied by the editor of "KEYNOTES," the only English journal that placed the importance of this International contest before the notice of British Mandolinists. It will convey some idea of the magnitude of the affair when it is stated that nearly seven hundred executants competed in the band contests alone, and in addition there were more than fifty soloists, and nearly as many quartets. To cope with this vast multitude of Mandolinists (representatives from most of the countries of Europe and even from Algeria, N. Africa), the four largest buildings in the town were monopolised throughout two whole days—the Casino, the Municipal Theatre, the Salon St. Beuve, and the Hotel des Pompiers. The contests were divided into several degrees of proficiency, that of "excellence" being the highest among the bands, while the "first" was the highest among the soloists. Some of these classes were again subdivided into two sections, the first and second.

All the band sections were in two distinct categories, two different kinds of bands—"classic" and "libre." The "classic" bands were those whose instruments consisted solely of the Mandolin and Guitar family, while the "libre" class consisted of Mandolin bands containing any other instrument in their ensemble. Thus it was possible for a band containing Banjos, 'Cello, Flute or any other instrument to have entered the contests under the sections of "Estudiantinas Libres," the money prizes in this class being £15. There were no restrictions as to entrance, each band, quartet or soloist entering the division they deemed themselves qualified for. The fees for entrance were merely nominal, being 4/- for band, 3/- for quartet and 1/6 for soloist. The competitions for bands consisted of "sight reading," the playing of the test piece—which was made known two months previous to the date of the contest—and a piece of the band's own selection. In the latter case the regulations prohibited any dance music, national airs and marches. The first trial for bands was the sight reading. Upon the name of the band being called, the members were ushered into the hall and handed the parts to be played. During this contest the band was alone with the jury or judges, who were seated at the farthermost end of the gallery; in all other tests the halls were open to the public free of admission. Five minutes was the time allowed for the perusal of the parts, and then the performance commenced. The second trial was for "execution," which consisted of the playing of the test piece—the composition made known to the competitors two months before the contest—and also the piece of the band's selection.

The committee of management in Boulogne made special arrangements for hotel accommodation, and also for reduced railway fares for all competitors. Upon the arrival of the various bands and quartets they were met on the landing stage or railway station by an official or member of the Boulogne Estudiantina, who escorted them to their respective hotels. Throughout Saturday the various trains arriving at the Gare Centrale brought many of the Mandolinists, who were received on the platform by M. Cannas, conductor of the Boulogne Estudiantina, and M. Hautin, the President of the Society, who extended a hearty welcome to all arrivals. An interpreter was placed at the disposal of each foreign band, and he escorted them to their respective contest hall, remained with them throughout the whole time, and acted as guide and friend during their stay. By twelve o'clock M. Alexander Georges, of the Paris Conservatoire, the President of the artistic committee, had arrived, and shortly afterwards came the "Choralia" Band and the "Circolo Mandolinist's Carmen," both from Lausanne, Switzerland. Following them were the "Filarmonica Po Borgo Po" from Turin, Italy, the "Estudiantina Monégasque," of the Principality of Monaco, and at about a quarter to five the "Cigale Rémoise" from Reims. The Luton Mandolin Band arrived by the turbine steamer at about six o'clock, while the "Mandolines Renaissances" of Philippeville, Algeria, Africa, and the "Estudiantina Belge" from Brussels, arrived at about the same time. The "Estudiantina St. Quintinoise" from St. Quintin, "La Mimosette" from Paris, and the "Estudiantina Calaisienne" from Calais arrived during the evening, and many others came during the night. In the evening the "Harmonie des Sapeurs Pompiers"—military band—gave a grand torchlight procession to the Casino, where the competing bands were entertained by a gala performance.

At eight o'clock the next morning (Sunday) a rehearsal of the massed Mandolin bands took place in the public gymnasium, M. Cannas conducting his "Estudiantina March," composed especially for the occasion, and then the different societies filed off with their guides to the various contest halls to take part in the sight reading and execution tests. This was a very protracted and tiresome procedure, lasting all the morning, and somewhat delayed the start of the procession announced to take place in the afternoon. It was a terrific rush to leave the contest halls and meet in the castle grounds at half-past one o'clock. It was not until about two o'clock, however, that the various bands began to assemble under the spreading trees of the Boulevard Eurvin, which threw their grateful shade on the road behind the picturesque château, and protected the participants of the procession from the heat of the sun. By degrees the Mandolin bands took up their positions, the exact place alloted to each band being distinguished by large printed notices, giving the name, town and country of each band, affixed to a long staff. These notices, as also the banners, were carried at the head of each band in the procession. Eventually, at twenty minutes past two, the signal was given for the procession to start, and what a sight to behold! This mighty array of devotees of the Mandolin from various nations, headed by a full military band—"L'harmonie du Commerce"—and followed immediately by the magnificent banner of the Boulogne Mandolin Society, was the beginning of the procession, which was more than a mile in length and formed a most imposing spectacle. In the centre of the procession was another military band—"Societé la Musicale"—and towards the end was still another, the "Harmonie des Sapeurs Pompiers." The procession entered the Hauteville by the Calais Gate, and an excellent view of procession was obtained from the ramparts and castle as it proceeded along the Rue de Lille, and as the Mandolinists entered the less wide portions of the road there was scarcely room to allow of a passage through the dense crowd of spectators. Arriving at the public square in the front of the Town Hall the various Mandolin bands were arranged in a semi-circle facing the Town Hall, which, like the streets, was gaily decorated with flags and bunting. Surrounded by a vast crowd of spectators and onlookers from every window in the vicinity, first one, then the other, of the three military bands struck up the national anthem of each country represented. From the windows and balcony of the Town Hall could be seen the Mayor (M. Peron), M. Rischmann, the Sous Préfet, M. Alexander Guilmant, M. Alexander Georges, Municipal Councillors, and the judges or members of the jury, who all watched the proceedings with intense interest.

The Mayor then held an official reception in the "Salle Eurvin" of the Town Hall, where a large number were present, including the conductor and president of each Mandolin band, the British and Russian Consuls and other State officials. Mr. Philip Bone, conductor, and Mr. H. Wilmin, secretary, of the Luton Mandoline Band, were the only Englishmen present, and Mr. Bone was the first conductor to be presented to the Mayor. Toasts were honoured and speeches made by the Mayor, M. Hautin, M. Georges and M. Guilmant, the latter advising the adoption of the Mandoline band as a part of the regular orchestra, giving it an equal position with the wood-wind and brass sections of the orchestra. After the reception all the massed Mandolins, nearly seven hundred executants, rendered the "Estudiantina" March, conducted by its composer, M. Cannas. This march is a happy inspiration, and is characterised by its alert, graceful movement. Its rendering by the combined instrumentalists was received with acclamations of applause by the vast audience, who congratulated both the composer and the performers.

As soon as the excitement had quieted, the procession was re-formed and then proceeded through crowds of people. It soon broke up, however, the first section headed by the "L'harmonie du Commerce" (military band) marched to the Municipal Theatre, the second section, headed by the military band "Societé Musicale," proceeded to the Casino, while the third section, headed by the remaining band, "L'harmonie des Sapeurs Pompiers," marched to the "Hotel des Pompiers." Then followed the "honours" contests. To attempt to give details of all the playing at the different halls would be ridiculous. It is sufficient to say that the solid English Mandolinists have no idea of the subtle nuances of expression, the mellow, liquid, rippling tone, the grandeur of the fortissimos, and above all the masterly execution of such Mandoline bands as those from Cremona (Italy), Lausanne (Switzerland) and Lille (France). The musical effect was sublime, and no other instruments or combination of instruments known could produce such effects. The compositions played by these bands included "Prometheus" Overture (Beethoven), "Noces du Figaro" (Mozart), and other classical works. It must be understood that their instrumentation, particularly in the bass sections, is as far in advance of the English as is their playing. They include the Guitaron, a double bass Guitar of marvellous vibrating power and effect, being far superior in Mandoline bands than the ordinary double bass, and also several each of tenor and bass Mandolas, Lutes and Liolas (double bass Mandolins). The Guitar sections of the bands are also particularly pleasing, the sonorous tones being quite undistinguishable from several Harps. In the quartets, too, it would be quite impossible to produce anything better as regards musical effect. The quartets were limited to first and second Mandoline, Mandola and Guitar, and in the "honours" tests the music performed included Beethoven's Quartet No. 8, Quartet in D major (Haydn), Adagio from Beethoven's "Pathetic" Sonata, "Poet and Peasant," and "Semiramide" overtures, and Munier's Quartet in G major. I had the pleasure of sitting at the back of the stage with a talented English flautist, and during these performances he sat completely entranced. Nothing in his estimation can exceed the beauty of tone and effect, no other four known musical instruments can produce such a perfect, satisfying and complete combination. He resolved there and then to devote himself entirely to the Mandoline, and several others of the Luton party at the same time vowed they would practise continually, hoping to attain in some degree to that mastery of perfection. At the conclusion of the tests for quartets, the winners of the grand prize for bands were called for—"Cremona! Cremona!" and amid thundering and excited applause the illustrious Mandolinists took their seats and again performed. The enthusiasm of the audience knew no bounds. Poli, their conductor, was recalled again and again, but the audience was insatiable, and did not quiet until the famous Italians struck up the "Marsellaise." In the evening there were two torch-light processions and a magnificent display of fireworks in the grounds of the Casino, and members of competing

bands were admitted free to the Casino and all entertainments.

The third day was set apart for quartet and solo playing, and these contests commenced at 10 o'clock and did not finish until 6.30 in the evening, the tests proceeding simultaneously in the same buildings. To name the prize winners in all the various sections would be of no interest, so only the prize winners of the highest sections and those in which English competitors were successful will be mentioned. In solo Mandolin the highest award was won by Conte Publio, of Turin. In the highest section for Guitar, Césare Bianco, of Turin, was successful; and for Mandolas and Lutes combined, Mr. Philip Bone, of Luton, won the first prize, then followed Signor Salvatore Leonardi, of Paris, and Mrs. Cremer, of London. In the "honours" sections of above, Publio and Bianco again took the first prizes, and in the Mandola and Lute section Leonardi won the grand prize, Mr. Bone the first, and Mde. Henning, of St. Quentin, the second. In the second section for Mandolin Miss Beryl Cremer, of London—a veritable prodigy on the Mandolin—obtained the first prize, and also won a second prize in the "honours" division of the second section.

Another torchlight procession took place this evening, and the contests were brought to an end by a banquet given by the Mayor, in the grand ball room of the Casino. Among those present were M. Alexander Georges, Rischmann, the Sous Préfet, Cannas, Hautin, Mr. Farmer the British Consul, Gripois, Director of the Conservatoire, Del Castillo, Pietrapertosa, Fantauzzi, Monti, and the only Englishman, Mr. Bone. Speeches were made by the Mayor, M. Georges, Lawyer Novati the President of the Cremona band, and others, and at 10 o'clock the party adjourned for the grand ball. The only English band in this contest was the Luton Mandolin band, who had entered the first section of the second division. They gained second prize in sight reading; first prize in "execution," when they played as their own selection Braga's Serenata, arranged specially by their conductor, Mr. Philip Bone; and also first prize in the "honours" section.

This last was their greatest triumph. They were escorted to the Municipal Theatre by M. Descotes, their guide, and after waiting for more than an hour in the dressing rooms, were suddenly ushered through the doors on to the stage. It would not have been surprising had the young ladies turned stage struck as they faced the densely packed theatre. The judges were seated in the farthermost end of the gallery, while the Mayor, Senator, and other officials were in the front row. The preceding band numbered forty or more performers, the Luton band could only find thirteen of its members brave enough to enter the contests, and so the conducting was dispensed with—the conductor playing first Mandolin—and this was the only band playing without a conductor. In an instant the cumbersome orchestral stands were placed aside for the portable metal ones, positions were taken, and at a look from Mr. Bone the band commenced. During the first few bars each member subconsciously felt that it was making effect, and, as the piece worked through, with its bass runs for Guitars and Mandolas, to the climax, we knew we were playing as well as we ever did. Pauses, rallentandos and rubatos were taken as by one player, no word was spoken on the stage, all being done by glances at each other, and the effect upon the audience was magical. At once a mighty applause rose, unknown exclamations resounded throughout the theatre, and would not diminish until the leader was led back from the dressing rooms to the stage to acknowledge, twice, the applause. In the evening it was announced that the Luton Band had won the first prize. The British Consul, Mr. Farmer, came to congratulate the Luton Band, and spent an interesting time in the company of the band, and M. Cannas brought flattering enconiums from M. Alexander Guilmant upon the Lute solos of Mr. Bone, the celebrated organist desiring the director to convey his hearty approval of the music and its skilful rendering. The English visitors will for ever bear happy remembrances of their visit to Boulogne, and also of their esteemed friend and guide M. Descotes, who so magnanimously entertained them during their stay.

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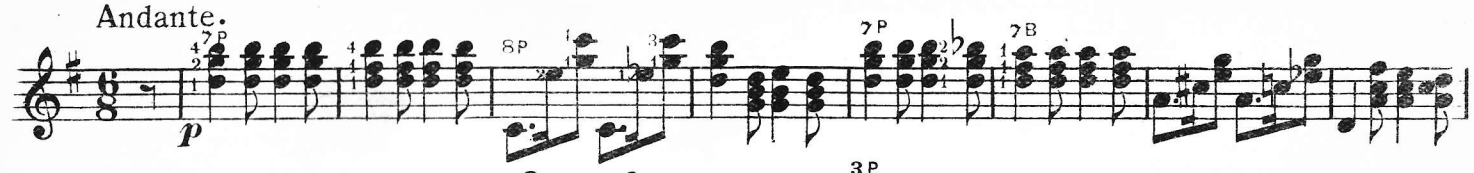
SWEET JASMINE.

2nd BANJO.

Ed Hesse & Olly Oakley.

Andante.



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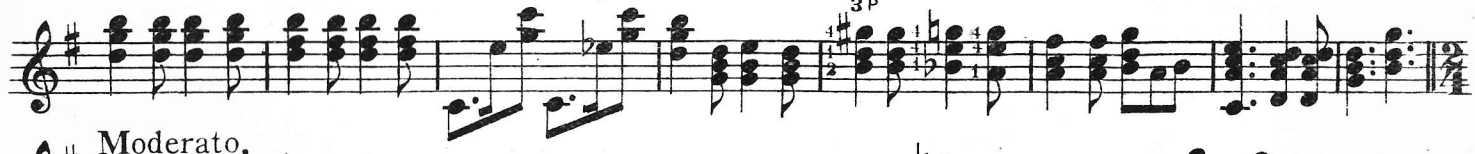

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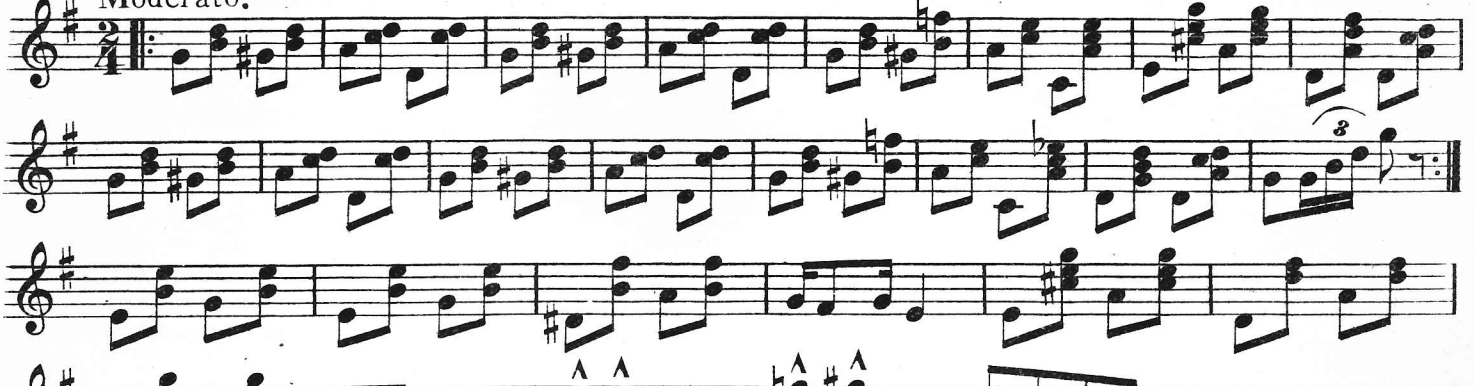

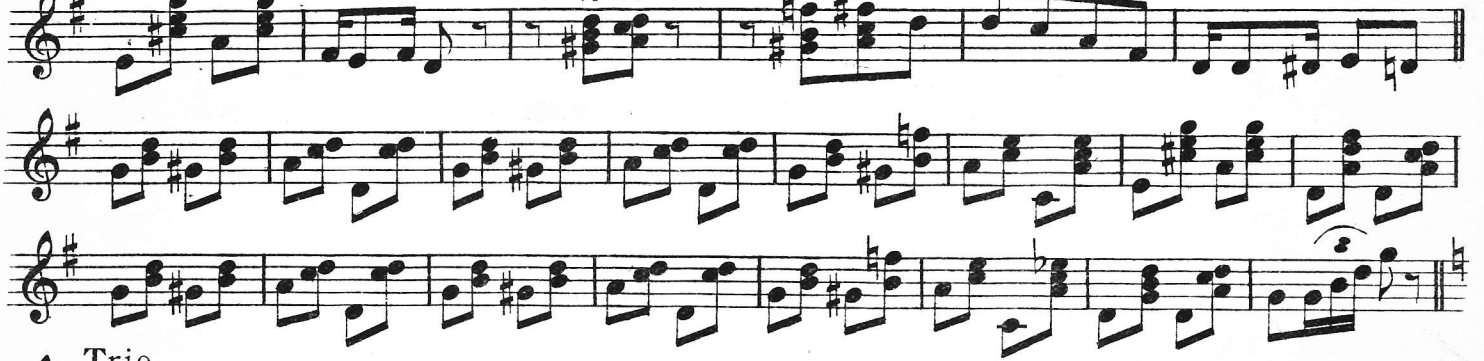

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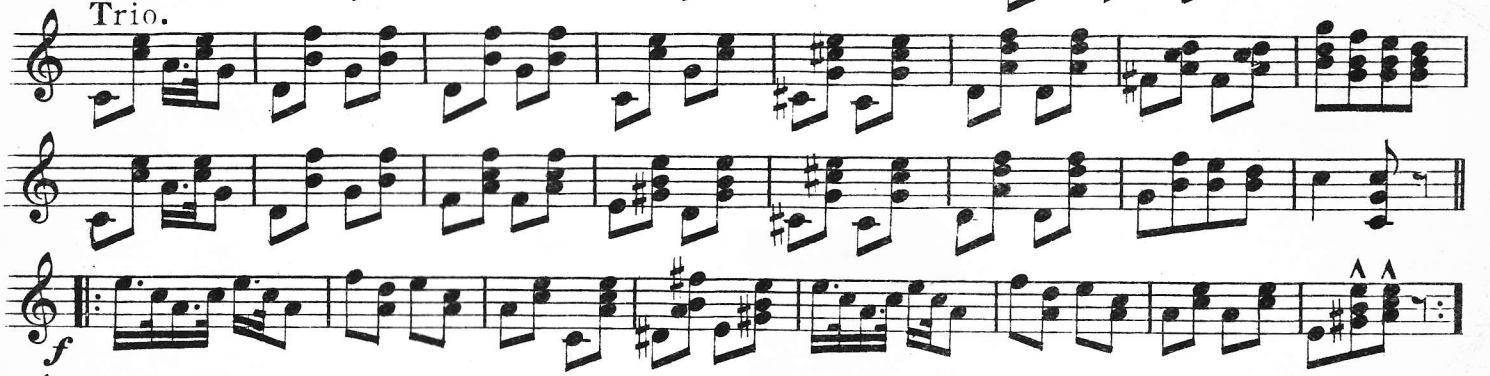

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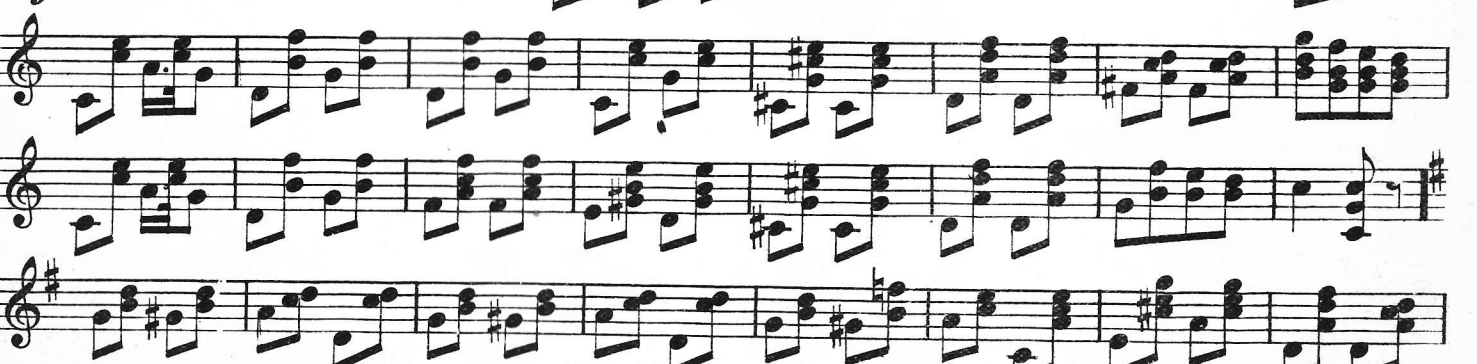
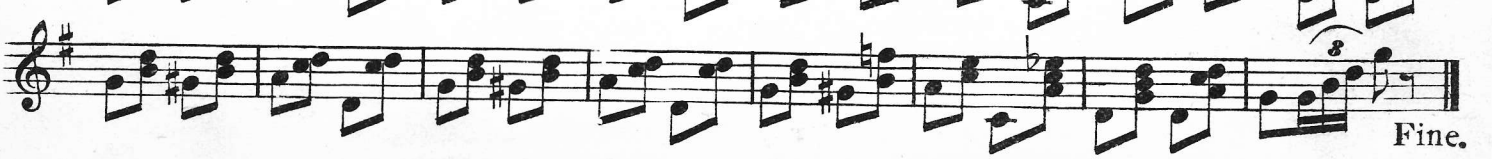




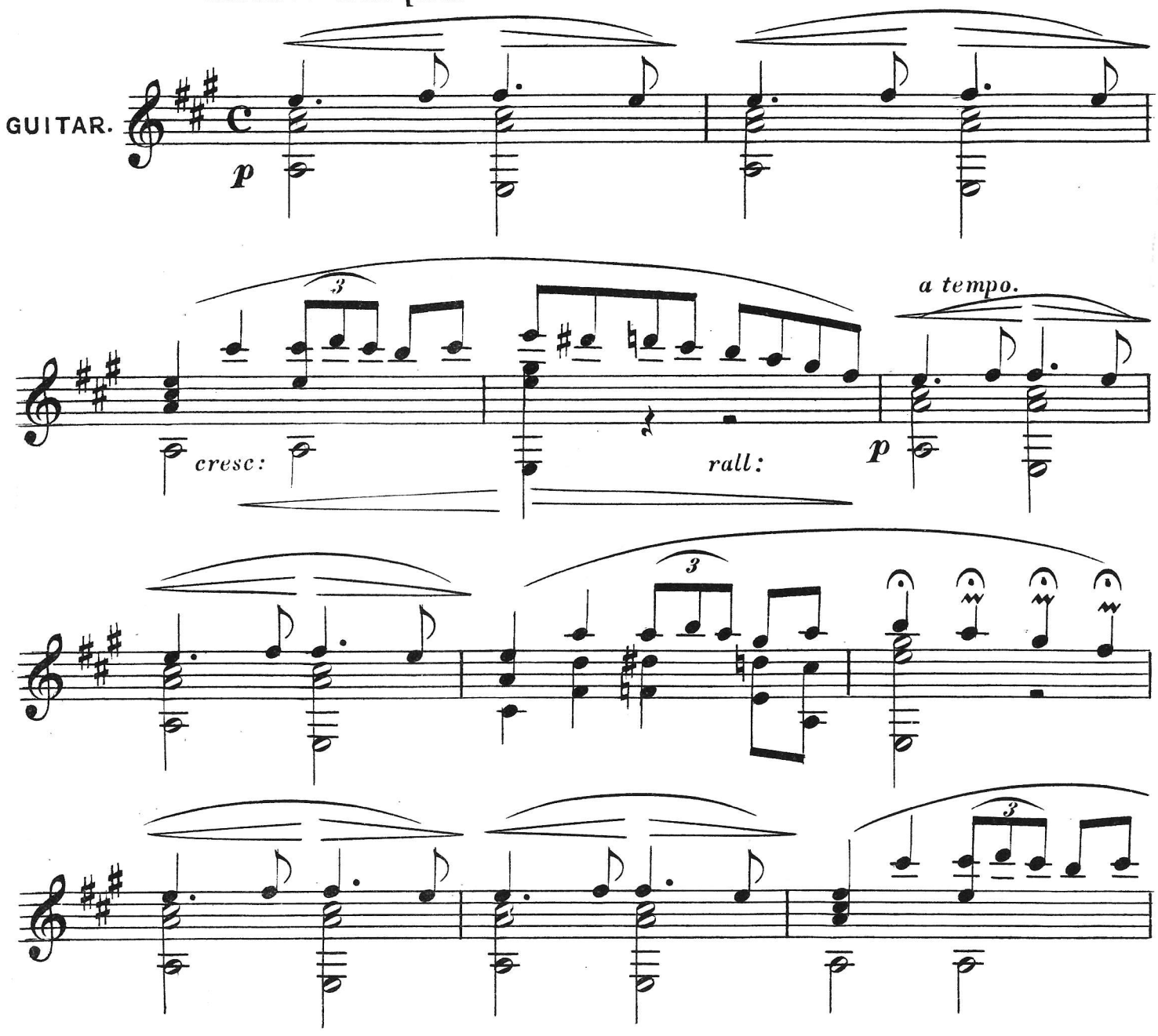
Fine.

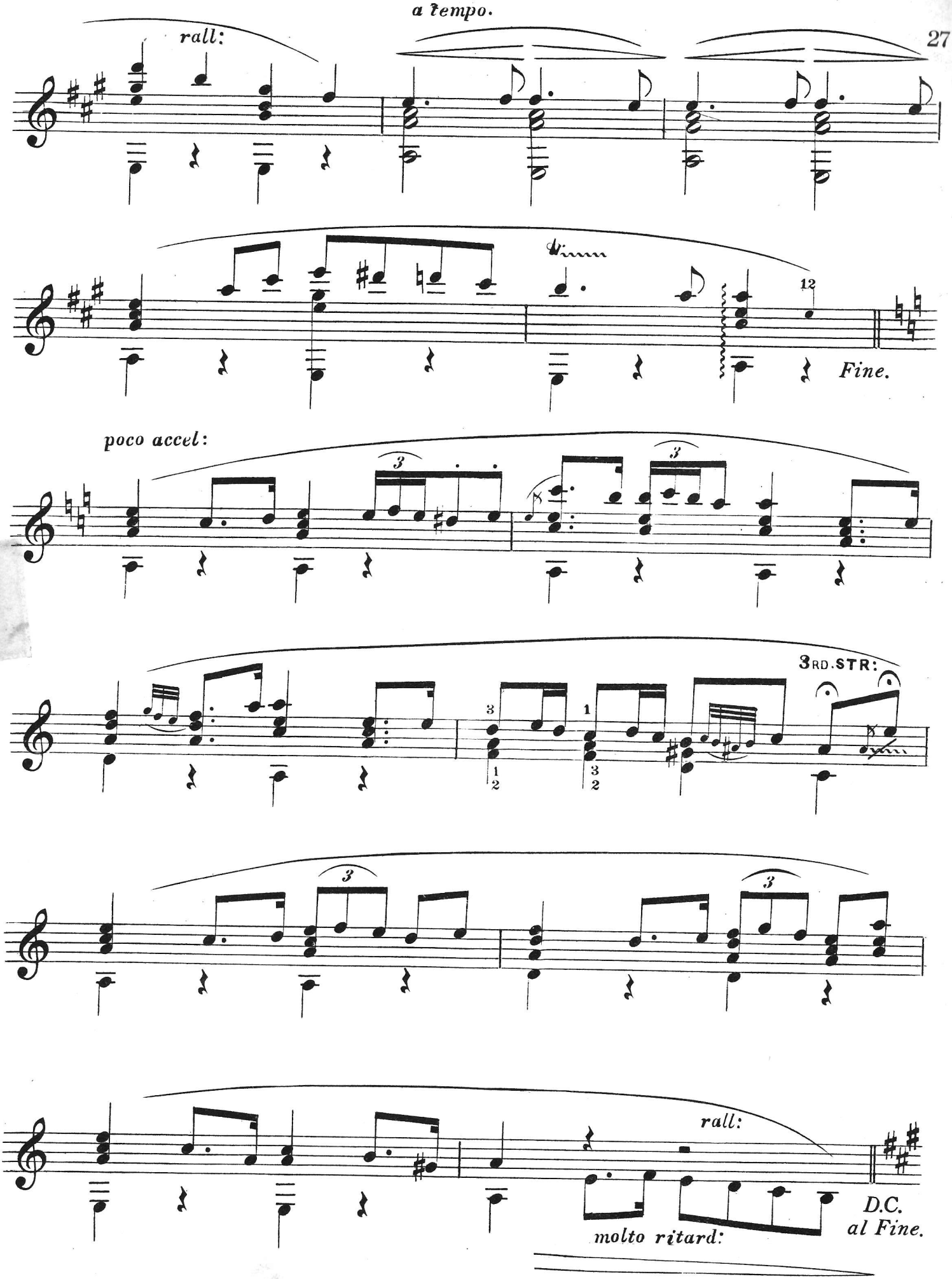
TO MISS HELEN LYBBE.

LA RÊVERIE.

Composed by
FRANK MOTT HARRISON.

Andante tranquillo.

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12
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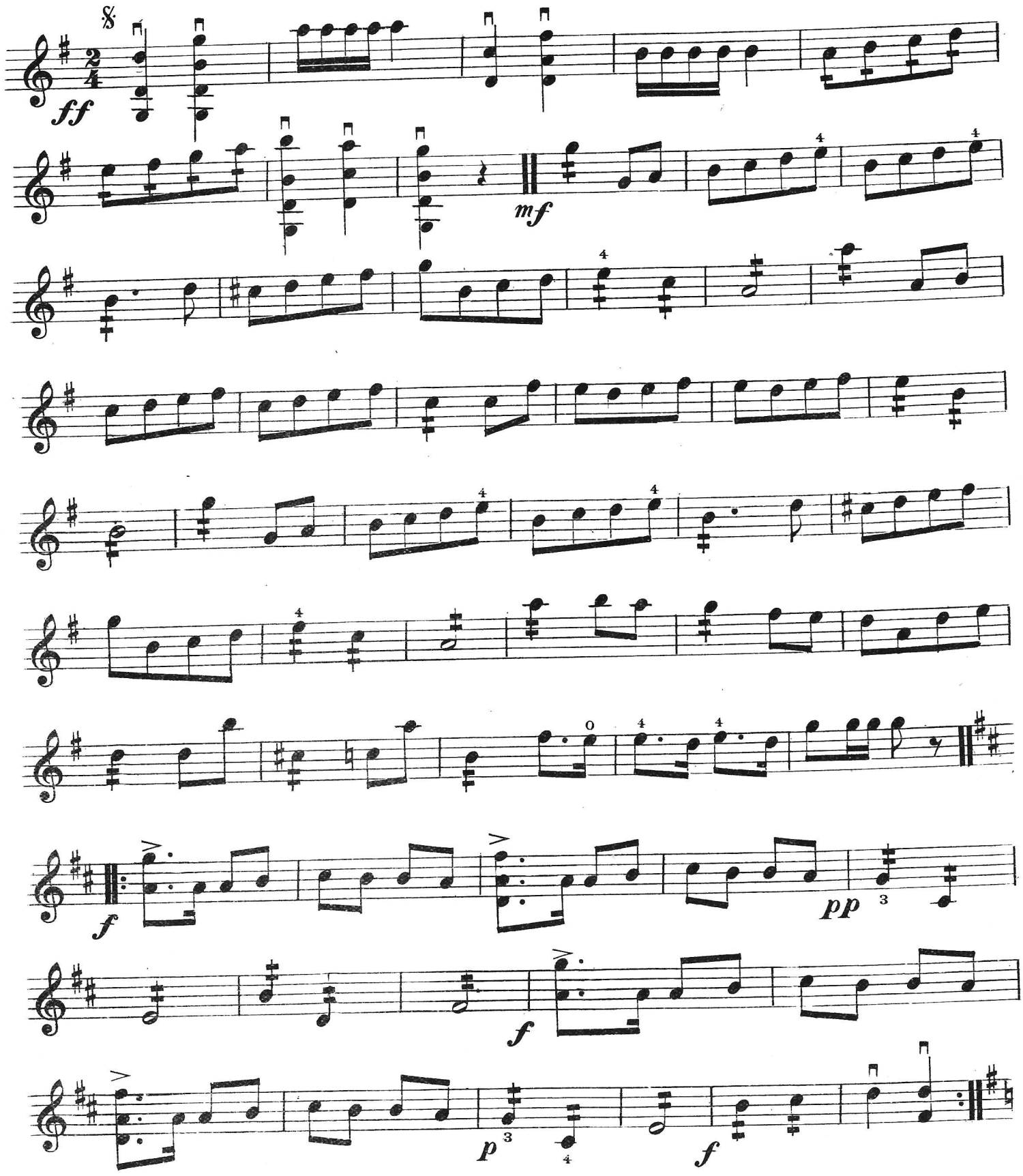
al Fine.

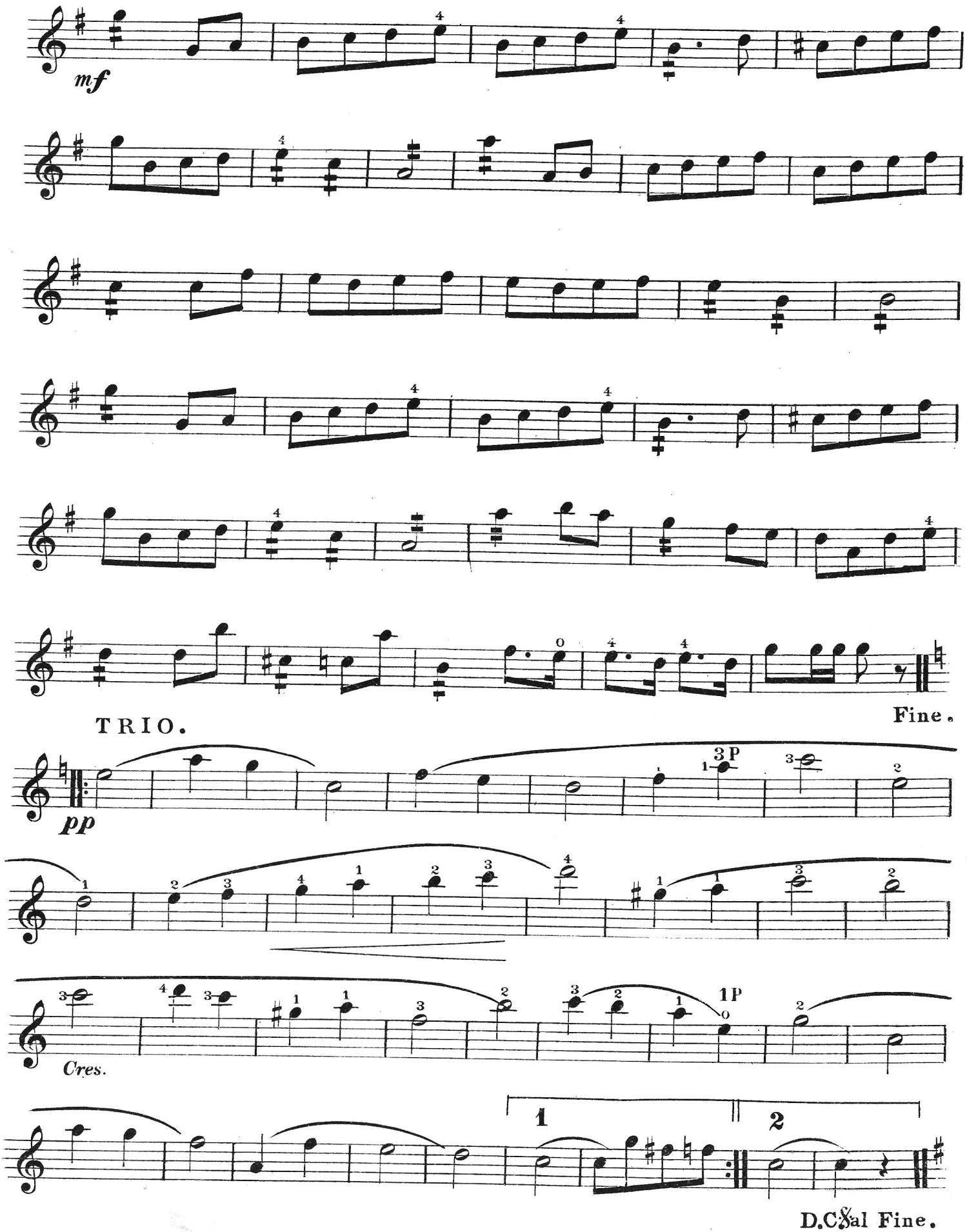
La Belle Française,

POLKA-MARCH.

ARTHUR STANLEY.

1st MANDOLINE.

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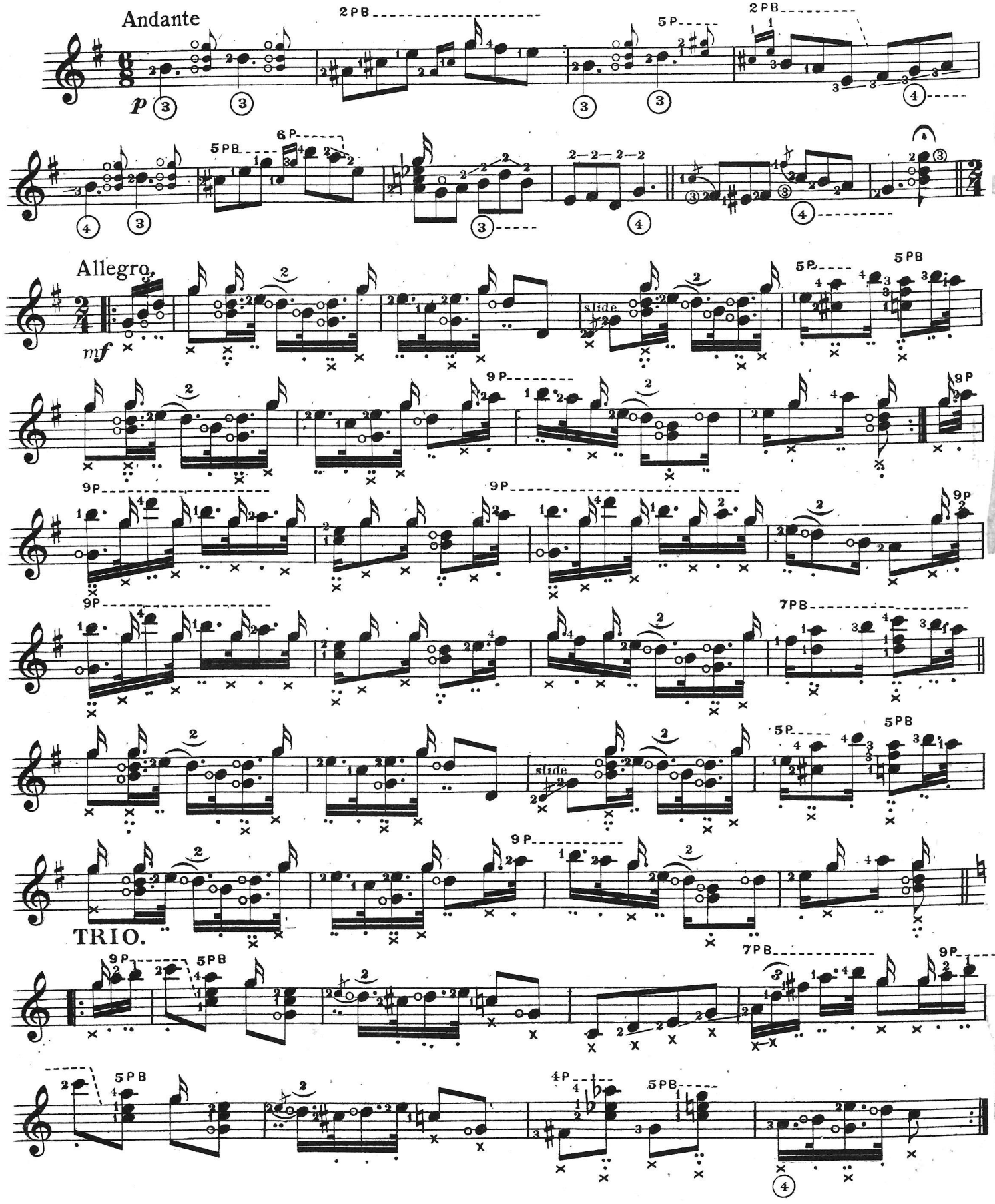
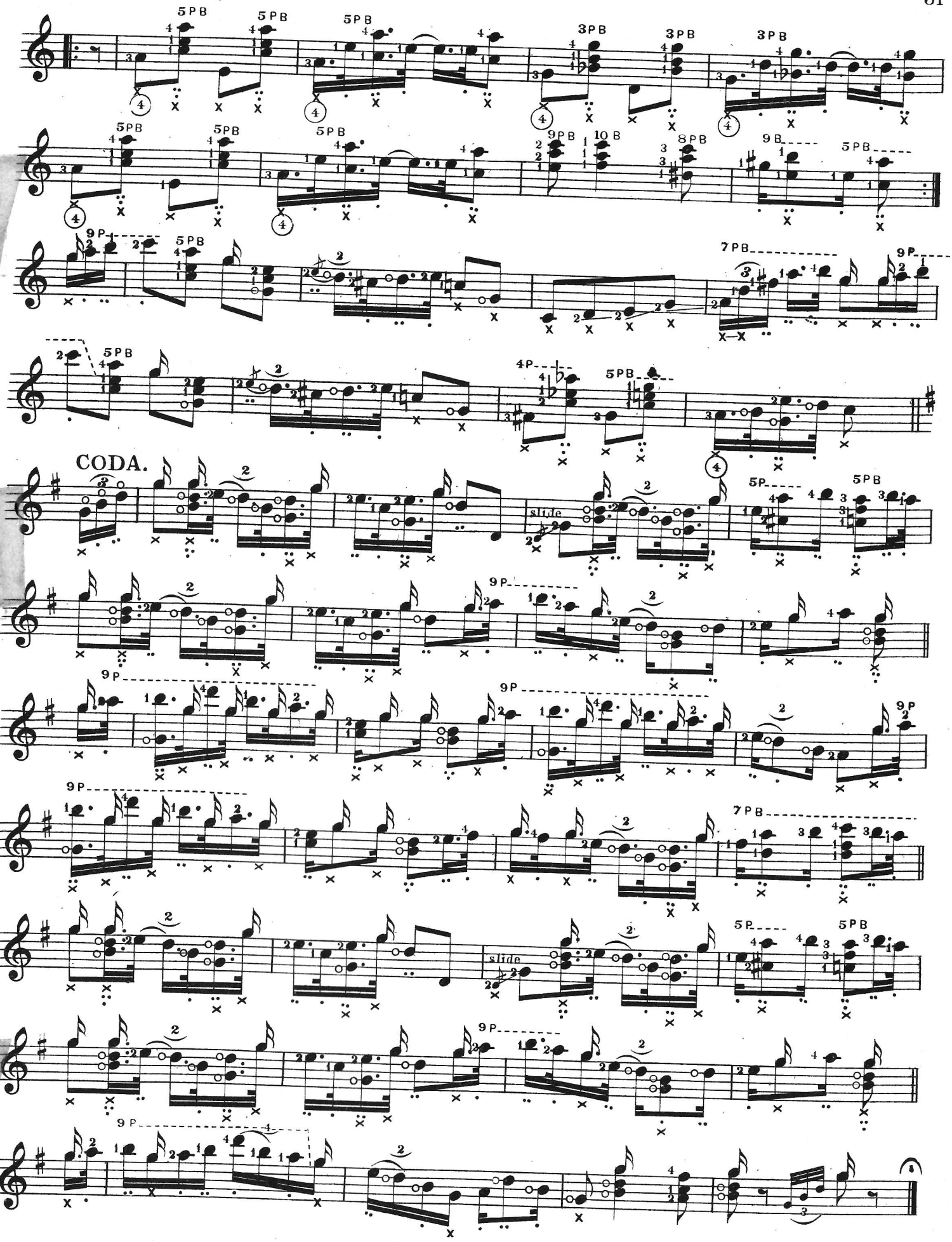
A DARKIE CHUCKLE.

BANDJO.

JOE MORLEY.

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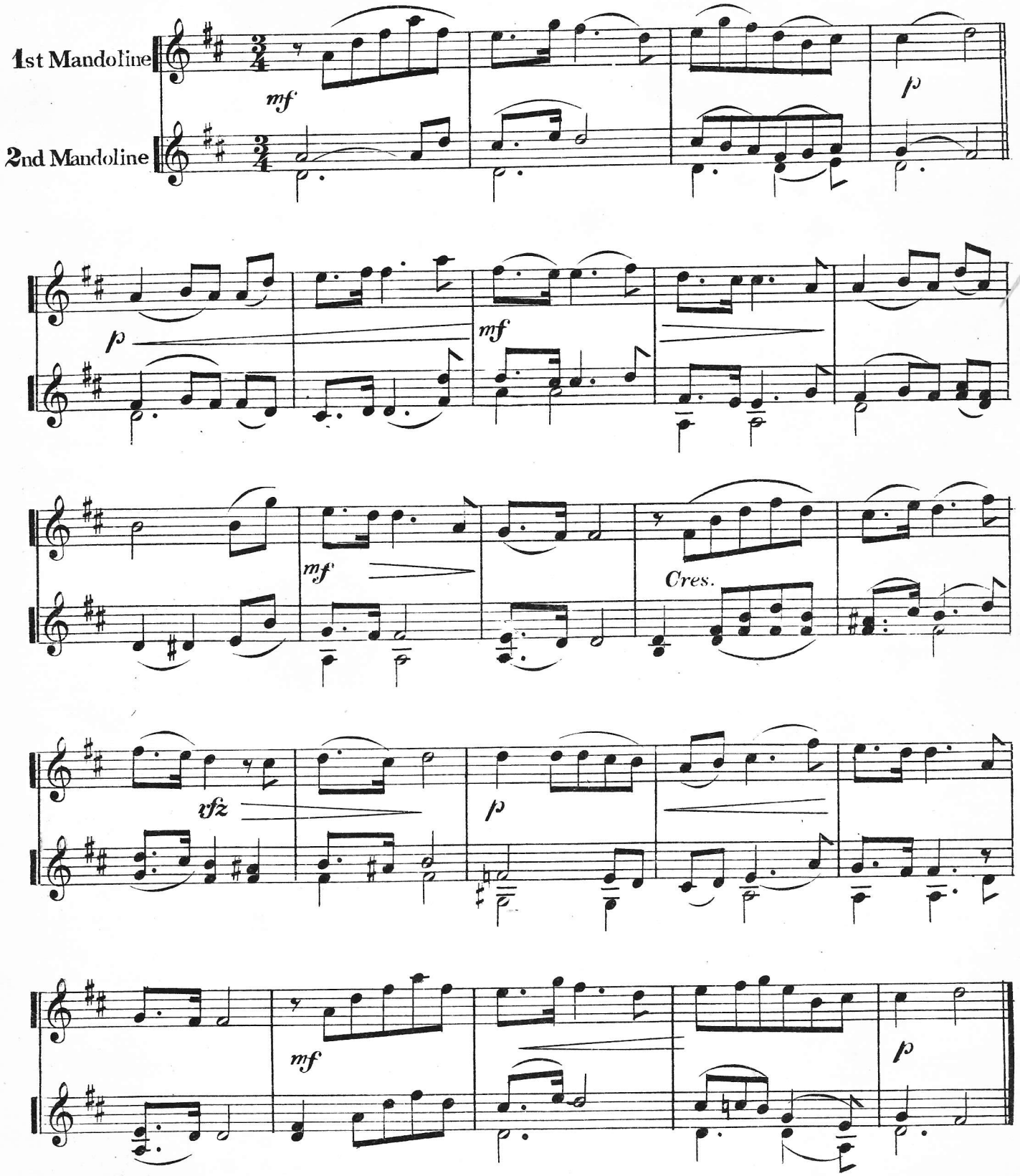

LEGER LINES.

Many Felixstowe visitors this year will be glad to have the opportunity of hearing the inimitable Joe Morley, with the especially strong company of "White Coons," which has now opened for a season of at least 18 weeks at the Pier Gardens.

✣ ✣ ✣

His Banjo solo "Darkie Chuckle," which was such a pronounced success at the recent Cammeyer concert, is included in this issue, and the Banjo Budget edition (full music size with Pianoforte accompaniment), is now ready.

✣ ✣ ✣

This famous player writes us that he has adopted the "Bestone Bridge" for his Banjos, and finds that all that has been said in its praise is fully borne out by his experience. He has given the Bridge every test, and is amply satisfied as to its strength and tone increasing qualities.

✣ ✣ ✣

According to a report on an address by Dr. Somervell on "Musical Taste," England was, in the days of Queen Elizabeth, the most musical country in the world. Every man could then sing and read music at sight. That's just like the luck of the music publishers. And of course then there were no music pirates either.

✣ ✣ ✣

Some strange and weird musical instruments of bygone days often find their way to auction sale rooms. One such example called a Tromba Marina, described as "one of the two or three specimens of this rare instrument in this country," was sold recently—and realized 22/6.

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It looked more like a Harp pillar than anything else, and appeared to have one thick gut string only—which was played with a bow. Pepys, in his Diary, gives a description of it and mentions his surprise at hearing *chords* when it was played to him. He noticed the instrument was open at one end, but he was not allowed to investigate into its construction.

✣ ✣ ✣

Sir Frederick Bridge, in one of his recent interesting Gresham lectures on 17th century music, showed and described the Tromba Marina, and explained that inside the case were sympathetic strings which echoed the notes played and so produced chords.

✣ ✣ ✣

The Welsh Eistedfodd just concluded appears to have been a success, notwithstanding the distance between London and its reputed home. The "penillon" singing seemed to be the greatest novelty here—extempore singing to a Harp accompaniment.

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One of our principal lady harpists (Miss K. Purcell) recently wrote that she believed there were signs of an awakening interest for "the instrument of kings." Her remarks on the subject of sore finger-tips are of interest—especially will they be so to Guitarists.

✣ ✣ ✣

She writes "That Harp-playing produces soreness and corns on the fingers is only true in those cases where the pupil has been wrongly taught. The richest and most sonorous effects are possible with the lightest touch. It is precisely the hard 'corn-making pluck' that produces hard, unsympathetic tones."

CONCERT REPORTS.

(Contributed by Correspondents).

WEST HAMPSTEAD TOWN HALL.—On Friday, May 28th, a Bohemian Concert was given here in aid of the funds of the Railway Men's Convalescent Home at Herne Bay. A Mandoline Band of 25 performers was made up of students at the International College of Music, and they gave three selections, all of which were well rendered and received encores. "Mignonette" Mazurka (*G. Belloni*) was especially appreciated, and quite a number of floral tributes were showered on the ladies of the band at its conclusion. The Committee very heartily congratulated those responsible for such a satisfactory concert.

✣ ✣ ✣

CAVENDISH ROOMS.—On June 24th a Matinée Musicale by Signora Vittoria del Bono (under distinguished patronage) was the occasion of the Guitar figuring prominently in a programme where many well-known artistes appeared. Señor Obregon himself played one of his compositions, "Fantasia Caprice," and joined his pupils (the Misses Radclyffe) in several other works of his own writing, much to the appreciation of a large and fashionable audience.

✣ ✣ ✣

CRYSTAL PALACE.—The Premier English Band had a splendid reception on the 16th ult.—playing a number of their best pieces in excellent style to a very large audience. On Saturday, July 10th, this fine orchestra will be playing at the White City, on the Sports Club Terrace, and will then doubtless further add to their already long roll of successes.

✣ ✣ ✣

QUEEN'S HALL.—Mr. Joseph Holbrooke gave an Orchestral and Choral Concert of his new works, assisted by the Alexandra Palace Choir, of 400 voices and the Beecham Orchestra of 90 performers, on Friday, June 25th. Mr. Holbrooke is a composer with modern ideas as to novel introductions for effects he wishes to produce, and on this occasion several instruments not included in the usual orchestra were requisitioned for the first time. If the plectral element is to be made use of seriously in the orchestra, as suggested in another column (in the report of the "Concours Mandolinistique") it will be to men such as Mr. Holbrooke that we shall look for the recognition of the Mandoline in this respect. Already we have a "Danse Arabienne" for this instrument from his gifted pen and we may hope for further developments.

✣ ✣ ✣

SYDNEY, N.S.W.—Mr. Stent sends us programmes of a number of Concerts at which his orchestra—the Sydney Plectral Society—have appeared. Three times was one programme repeated at Mortlake (N.S.W.)—April 28th, May 11th and May 21st. At Randwick Town Hall on May 5th, and in other buildings on May 25th and 28th, they supplied the whole of the instrumental part of the programmes. These included, amongst others, "Return of the Regiment" (*Grimshaw*), "Boccacio" March, and "Life's Lighter Hours" Gavotte Caprice. Several bookings were also made for June.

MORE MANDOLINE MATTERS.

By HAVELOCK MASON.

THERE is room for very considerable doubt as to whether the Mandoline has ever really been appreciated in this country on its merits as a musical instrument. Of course thousands have played it and hundreds have taught it—and are teaching it now—and they get music from it, and play plenty of music *on* it, and to this extent are satisfied with the results they obtain. But, by the greater majority of persons it is thought to be a variety of Violin—very much easier to play of course—and looked on in a more tolerant spirit during the progress of elementary lessons, by reason of the fretted fingerboard minimising the ear-racking infliction of weird intervals, so often apparent in other musical studies.

To a fair knowledge of the fingerboard is acquired a more or less even tremolo (which, in many cases, would be more correctly described as "staccato"), and the student is now able to play "serenades," and "reveries," and "polka marches," to his or her heart's content, and much pleasure is undoubtedly derived from their performance.

In some instances the pupil has reached the limit of the professor's knowledge and skill, and for lack of hearing more advanced work, or because there is no band or orchestra to practice with—interest begins to flag, and by gradual stages neglect shows itself, until at last the stereotyped excuse "I never play now" is only too true.

In musical matters, more than many others, it is most essential to progress that the student should have ideals to work up to, models to study from, and teachers of experience to illustrate the methods of overcoming difficulties as they arise.

Pianists and Violinists give countless concerts and recitals during the year in the cities and large towns—besides those in London itself—so that there are always opportunities arising for hearing the finest exponents of playing, while the professors themselves must necessarily be of a high standard to maintain their position in the front rank.

This is more essential now that the many Academies and Colleges of Music hold examinations and grant degrees and diplomas which, whatever their intrinsic value may be from an artistic or commercial point of view, certainly exercise no inconsiderable influence amongst amateur players, and, besides being an incentive to their studies, are an undoubted advantage to the teaching fraternity at large. Up to the present the Mandoline *has* suffered from a want of recognition, with one or two exceptions, and the Guildhall School of Music must be considered in the front rank of these, for the interest its principal, Dr. Cummings, takes in the advance of the instrument of which Madame Fiammetta Waldahoff is the painstaking professor. There are very few institutions that even include the Mandoline in their syllabus.

"KEYNOTES" *has* succeeded to an extent in waking up some signs of life amongst many players, and in outlying districts, but the effects of a revival must be widespread before its powers can be generally felt, and some hundreds of copies of a piece of music have to be sold before the the cost of production is repaid. Consequently, there must be some influence to aid a publisher, who, whatever his ideals may be, is entirely in the hands of the public as regards the success of his productions.

So, as the teacher can only instruct where his services are in demand, it follows that a demand must be first created, and for this end there is no power so great as that of the concert performer.

Let his or her work be good, and it will be appreciated, and there are sure to be some in the audience who will be filled with a desire to achieve something of a similar kind themselves, or, if they are already students they will be inspired to futher efforts.

Hence the Ballad Concerts promoted by the prominent song publishers. There is the certainty that the fact of great singers giving new songs will inevitably mean a demand for those works, and herein, in their case is a far more reaching result than the actual return from seats sold. With solo instrumentalists to a large extent this spirit of emulation creates a demand for teachers, and reacts through the various channels of the profession and the trade.

Amongst those who have the undoubted right to a premier position in the ranks of Mandoline soloists, the name of Signor Persichini will stand. We have already referred to his arrival in London, and since our last issue have had other opportunities of confirming the high opinions that he brings from the Continent. From picturesque Tivoli (a short distance from the "Eternal City" of Rome), this artiste comes with the results of seventeen years study under the best teachers that the home of the Mandoline can produce. During the past three years the famous Roman master Consorti has been fitting his pupil Benedetto Persichini for a career as an exponent of the higher branches of playing, such as are but rarely heard in this country. In fact there are reasons for doubting whether the particular styles and effects produced by him are adopted by any other *solo* player in England at the present time. As an illustration of this, a paragraph in our May issue will serve. Some "Leger Lines" ran—"whether Mandolinists should play with a flat or an arched wrist is another question that some of the best authorities are always debating." The explanation by Signor Persichini at once placed the whole matter clearly, by his showing that the differing styles were due primarily to the construction of the Mandoline itself. In Italy there are two distinct models in use, one the Neapolitan and the other the Roman.

The former are more generally used by reason of their extensive manufacture and output, so much so in fact that the latter are comparatively rarely seen here. The differences in model may be of interest to Mandolinists, and are briefly as follows:—In the first place the Neapolitan is altogether more graceful in shape, has well marked curves in construction, with a smaller body. The Roman is narrower across the upper part of the body—above the sound-hole—and at the back, in the deepest part, has a far more perceptible "bulge," whilst the table or "belly" slopes very considerably below the bridge to where the strings pass under the guard. It will be seen therefore that these differences must account for several changes in the methods of playing, for where the Neapolitan can be supported against the body whilst in a standing position, with the Roman the performer must be seated. So, it would be almost impossible to play with a flat wrist on the latter model. With the arm and fingerboard too there are quite distinct differences, for a section of the Roman arm or neck would be almost a triangle with a ridge running down the back, besides which, the fingerboard is much narrower. In the manner of holding the latter in the left hand, the

method is to simply support the neck with the above mentioned ridge resting just *above* the joint of the first finger—where it hinges with the palm of the hand—instead of (in the case of the more semicircular shaped back of the Neapolitan arm) being placed *below* this joint, in the hollow between the thumb and first finger. The Roman model invariably has its fingerboard extended over the sound-hole, and here will be seen the reason for having the width of the instrument at this part much narrower, to allow for greater ease in reaching the high positions. And another slight but important difference will be seen in the bridge, for instead of the strings being all the same distance from the "table," in this case they are graded in height, and arranged to slope downwards from the fourth strings to the firsts, whilst where the "A" strings pass over, there is a portion of the wood slightly scooped away, so as to allow a fractional greater length of vibration—just that little that guarantees perfect tuning to this ofttimes uncertain pair.

These slight variations in detail are sufficient to account for differences which would be noticed by those who have studied in the Neapolitan school of playing, and they are given to show that in Italy the instrument has reached a position in advance of that it holds here. And, judging by the reports as to the public performers of America, and the music there published, we are behind *that* country also in our recognition of the capabilities of the Mandoline. This is in no way a matter on which we need distress ourselves, quite the contrary, for it points to the necessity for advancement and progress. It opens the door of the concert room to the meritorious artiste, and it suggests a widening of the sphere of the teacher, whilst it elevates the instrument itself to a position beyond that at present appreciated by the majority of both players and public.

That the Mandoline as a solo instrument can appeal to the general public—apart from the section called the musical world—has been proved conclusively during this last week of June, by Signor Persichini's appearances at the Holloway Empire, North London. An opportunity was given him to make a trial of how his playing would be appreciated by an audience at a Variety Theatre, and although unknown, unannounced, and unexpected, his performance of "Carnival of Venice," with marvellously rendered variations, rivetted immediate attention, and secured a perfectly unanimous desire for another solo. In response, an unaccompanied "Fantaisie" of his own composition was given—a slight alteration of tuning of the lower strings being the work of a few seconds—and the packed house listened silently and spellbound. In every part of the Theatre every note could be heard clearly and distinctly and the applause that followed its conclusion, and the many times the performer had to return and acknowledge his thanks, left no doubt whatever, not only that the instrument can make itself heard, but that it can get to the hearts of the people. So satisfied were the management of the result of Signor Persichini's first appearance that an engagement was immediately offered him, and during the remainder of the week he was retained there, with a repetition of his success at every appearance. That means that several thousand people in that one district alone have probably a higher estimation of what the Mandoline is capable of than they have had before. Repeat this all over the country, and it must necessarily mean an improvement in general opinion, whatever the ultimate result may be—that we can only hope for. The instrument has far too long been allowed to keep at an amateur level. Take the music hall audiences alone and see what their opinions would be formed by! The "turn" immediately preceding Signor Persichini's first appearance was given by a troupe of trick bicyclists. Of these one stood on another's shoulders, whilst *he* pedalled round the stage on *one* wheel, playing a Guitar at the same time as accompaniment to a Mandoline played by the man above. Another in London announces a skating act, wherein the lady represents a humming top, spinning round and playing a Mandoline. A balancing performance recently, in which were some wonderful feats on a ladder, included the playing of a Mandoline when the performer had reached the topmost rung.

The impression that these all convey cannot be of value to the instrument, it never has a chance in them of shewing what it *can* be capable of.

It is proved that the public can appreciate good work, that we have the material for providing it has been shewn by the recent English successes at Boulogne. Why should we not make renewed efforts towards its firmer establishment amongst us?

An event, for which we were not entirely unprepared, and in which our readers will join us in congratulations, was the marriage on Whit Monday of Miss K. Hall, the conductress of the Potteries B.M.G. Orchestra, with Mr. Morris Dolby, a prominent banjoist in the district. Our correspondent states:—

"The wedding created quite a stir, as a large number of people gathered round Miss Hall's residence to catch a glimpse of the bride as she drove to St. Jude's Church, Shelton. Arriving there, she was met by another little crowd of friends and admirers. The bride was dressed in cream silk and lace. The bridesmaids were Miss Jessie Dolby and Miss Gladys Boon, who were both in cream dresses and wore gold brooches, the gifts of the bridegroom. The orchestra presented the bride with a handsome walnut table on May 26th, the occasion of their last rehearsal night for this season. They then had a social evening and played Banjo and Mandoline items, amongst which were their especial favourites—Twilight Waltz, Novar March, Il Trovatore, English Airs, &c."

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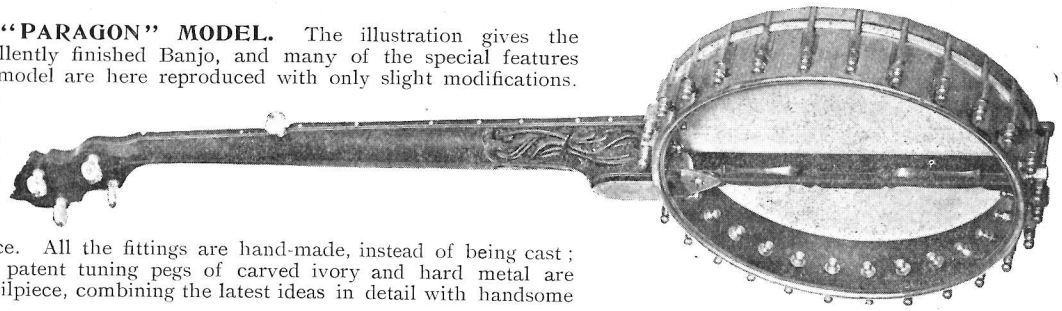

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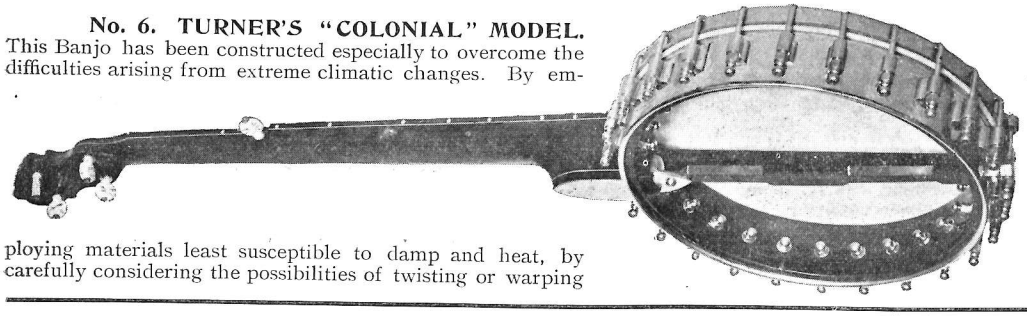

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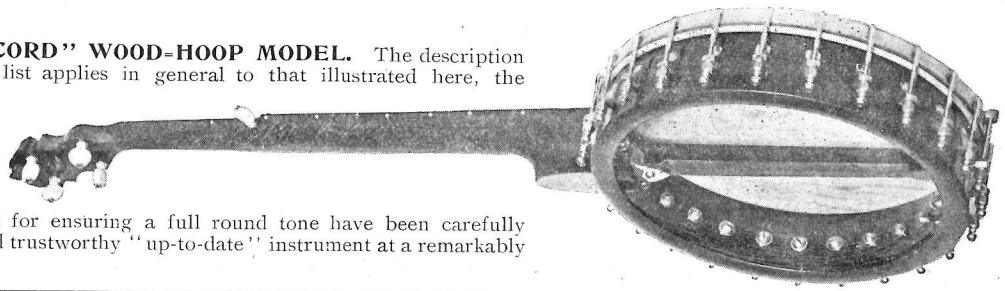

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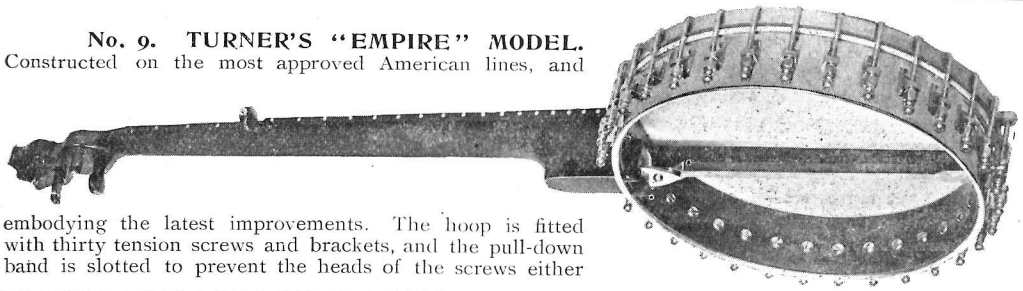

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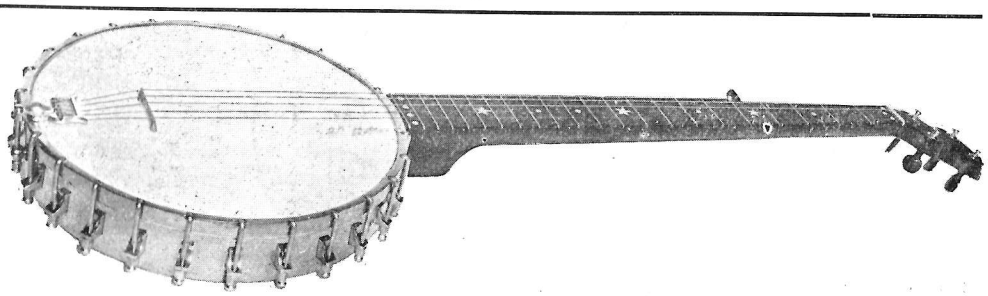

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F. W. COLLINS, Emerson Street

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